Purpose: This project will fund a special education preservice planning improvement initiative to enhance special education teacher education curricula at five member colleges and universities of the Associated Colleges of Illinois (ACI). The project involves a collaboration with ACI’s Center for Success in High-Need Schools, in which the University of St. Francis and all T-SPED schools are active partners. The project is meant to improve the preparation of highly qualified special education teachers (HQTs) in Illinois.

Method: The project will use curriculum transformation to ensure that: (a) graduates of partner programs meet the HQT requirements in both the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); (b) graduates who expect to teach core academic subjects have the necessary content knowledge to meet the HQT requirements of NCLB and IDEA; (c) graduates are accomplished with evidence-based practice, including the Response to Intervention approach now being implemented in Illinois schools; (d) graduates of the program benefit from coursework and clinical experience that prepare them for the hands-on realities of high-need classrooms; and (e) the project shares the knowledge it develops about the use of evidence-based practices that help more children with high-incidence disabilities meet high standards for learning core academic subjects, regardless of classroom setting.

Products: